

School of Theology at Claremont



10011436343

1155202871

Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Guide for Catechists

**Document of vocational, formative and
promotional orientation of Catechists in the
territories dependent on the Congregation for
the Evangelization of Peoples**



Vatican City, 1993

BX
1968
C295
1993



The Library
of the
School of Theology
at Claremont

1325 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711-3199
1/800-626-7820

BX
1968
.C295
1993

Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS

**Document of vocational, formative and
promotional orientation of Catechists in the
territories dependent on the Congregation
for the Evangelization of Peoples**

Vatican City 1993

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION / 7

1. An indispensable service / 7

PART I: AN APOSTLE EVER RELEVANT / 9

I. The Catechist in a Missionary Church / 9

2. Vocation and identity / 9
3. Role / 10
4. Categories and tasks / 11
5. Prospects for development in the near future / 13

II. The Catechist's Spirituality / 15

6. Necessity and nature of spirituality for the catechist / 15
7. Openness to the Word / 16
8. Coherence and authenticity of life / 18
9. Missionary zeal / 19
10. Devotion to Mary / 20

III. The Catechist's Attitude to Some Contemporary Issues / 21

11. Service to the community as a whole and to particular groups / 21
12. Need for inculturation / 23
13. Human development and option for the poor / 24
14. Spirit of ecumenism / 25
15. Dialogue with those of other religions / 26
16. Attention to the spread of sects / 28

PART II: CHOICE AND FORMATION OF CATECHISTS / 30

IV. Choice of Candidates / 30

- 17. Importance of a proper choice / 30
- 18. Criteria for selection / 30

V. Process of Formation / 32

- 19. Need for proper formation / 32
- 20. Unity and harmony in the personality of catechist / 32
- 21. Human maturity / 33
- 22. Deep spiritual life / 34
- 23. Doctrinal training / 36
- 24. Pastoral spirit / 39
- 25. Missionary zeal / 40
- 26. Attitude to the Church / 41
- 27. Agents of formation / 42
- 28. Initial formation / 43
- 29. Ongoing formation / 44
- 30. Means and structures of formation / 45

PART III: THE RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CATECHISTS / 48

VI. Remuneration for Catechists / 48

- 31. The financial question in general / 48
- 32. Practical solutions / 48

VII. Responsibility of the People of God / 49

- 33. Responsibility of the community / 49
- 34. Responsibility of the bishops in particular / 50
- 35. Responsibility of the priests / 51
- 36. Responsibility of the formators / 52

CONCLUSION / 53

- 37. A hope for the mission of the third millennium / 53

NOTES / 54

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopacy,
Dearly beloved Priests,
Beloved Catechists,*

In this historical period, which for various reasons is very sensitive and favorable to the influence of the Christian message, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples has maintained a special interest in some categories of people, who play a decisive role in missionary activity. In fact, after having looked at formation in major seminaries (1986), considered the life and ministry of priests (1989), our Congregation directed its attention to lay catechists, in the Plenary Assembly of April 1992.

*Catechists have always had a very important role in the secular journey of evangelization. Even today, they are considered to be irreplaceable evangelizers, as the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* so rightly states. In his message to our Plenary Assembly, the Holy Father confirmed the uniqueness of their role: "During my apostolic journeys I have been able to observe personally what the catechists offer, especially in mission territories, an 'outstanding and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and the Church.'" (AG 17)*

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples experiences directly the undisputed effectiveness of lay catechists. Under the direction of priests, in fact, they continue with frankness to announce "the Good News" to their brothers and sisters of other religions, preparing them for entry into the ecclesial community through baptism. Through religious instruction, preparation for the sacraments, animation of prayer and other works of charity, they help the baptized to grow in the fervor of the Christian life. Where there is a shortage of priests, the catechists are also entrusted with the pastoral guidance of the little community separated from the Center. Often, they are called to witness to their faith by harsh trials and painful privations. The history of evangelization past and present attests to their constancy even to the giving of life itself. Catechists are truly the pride of the missionary Church!

The present Catechists' Guide, fruit of the last Plenary Assembly, expresses the concern of the missionary Dicastery on behalf of this "deserving band" of lay-apostles. This Guide contains a vast and precise amount of material, which covers various topics: the identity of the catechist, his/her selection, formation and spirituality; basic apostolic tasks and finally, the economic situation.

With great hope I entrust this Guide to the Bishops, Priests and to the Catechists themselves, inviting them to scrutinize it carefully and to carry out its directives. In particular, I ask Catechetical Centers and Schools for catechism to refer to this document for their formation and teaching programs, while for content they already have in their hands the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published after the Plenary Assembly.

The diligent and faithful use of this Catechists' Guide in all the Churches dependent on our missionary Dicastery will contribute, not only to bringing about a renewed image of the catechist, but will also guarantee a concerted growth in this vital sector for the future of mission in the world.

This is my sincere wish confided in prayer to Mary, "Mother and Model of Catechists," so that she may become more and more a consoling reality in all the young Churches.

The Holy Father, informed of this commitment of our Dicastery and having seen the text of the Guide, greatly appreciated and encouraged the initiative, wholeheartedly giving his apostolic blessing, most particularly to the catechists.

Rome, Feast of Saint Francis Xavier, December 3rd, 1993

Jozef Card. Tomko, Prefect

INTRODUCTION

1. An indispensable service

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) has always had a special concern for catechists, convinced as it is that these are, under the direction of their Pastors, a factor of prime importance in evangelization. In April 1970 it published some practical directives for catechists,¹ and now, conscious of its responsibility and of radical changes in the missionary world, the CEP would like to call attention to the present situation, the problems that arise, and prospects for the development of this "*praiseworthy army*" of lay apostles.² It is encouraged in this project by the many pressing interventions of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, who, during his apostolic voyages, makes use of every opportunity to stress the importance and relevance of the work of catechists as a "*fundamental evangelical service*."³ Our task is a demanding but also a necessary and an attractive one,⁴ seeing that, from the very beginning of Christianity and wherever there has been missionary activity, catechists have made, and continue to make, "*an outstanding and indispensable contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church*."⁵

And so, having examined, in its Plenary Assembly of April 27-30, 1992, the information and suggestions that came in from a wide-ranging consultation with bishops and catechetical centers in mission territories, the CEP has drawn up this **Guide for Catechists**, which treats in a doctrinal, existential and practical way the principal aspects of the catechists' vocation, identity, spirituality, selection and training, missionary and pastoral tasks, and remuneration, along with the responsibility of the People of God towards them, in today's conditions and those of the immediate future.

Under each heading we will try to give the ideals to be aimed at, along with the essential considerations, while taking account of the difficulty, in certain missionary situations, of defining who exactly can be called a catechist. The directives are

8 *Guide for Catechists*

deliberately given in general terms, so as to be applicable to all catechists in the young Churches. It is up to the respective Pastors to make them more specific, in keeping with the requirements and possibilities of the individual Churches.

The Guide is addressed first of all to the lay catechists themselves, but also to the bishops, priests, religious, formators and the faithful, by reason of the strong links between the various components of the ecclesial community.

Before this Guide could see light, the Holy Father John Paul II had approved the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*⁶ ordering its publication. The extraordinary importance, for the Church as well as for every man of good will, of this rich and synthetic "exposition of the faith of the Church and of catholic doctrine, verified and enlightened by the Sacred Scripture, by the apostolic Tradition and by the Magisterium"⁷ is well known. Even though this is a document of different aim and content, it becomes immediately evident that the new catechism could offer some special enlightenment at different points of the Guide and, above all, that it could be a sure and authentic point of reference for the formation and for the activities of the catechists. In the final edition of the text, therefore, care has been taken to point out, particularly in the notes, the principal connections with the themes exposed in the catechism.

It is our hope that this Guide will be used as a reference book and will be a source of unity and encouragement for catechists and, through them, for their ecclesial communities. The CEP offers it, therefore, to the Episcopal Conferences and to individual bishops as an aid to the life and apostolate of their catechists and as a basis for the renewal of national and diocesan catechetical programs and directors.

PART I

AN APOSTLE EVER RELEVANT

I. The Catechist in a Missionary Church

2. Vocation and identity

Every baptized Catholic is personally called by the Holy Spirit to make his or her contribution to the coming of God's kingdom. Within the lay state there are various *vocations*, or different spiritual and apostolic roads to be followed by both individuals and groups. Within the general vocation of the laity there are particular ones.⁸

At the origin of the catechist's vocation, therefore, apart from the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, there is a specific call from the Holy Spirit, a "*special charism recognized by the Church*"⁹ and made explicit by the bishop's mandate. It is important for the catechist candidate to recognize the supernatural and ecclesial significance of this call, so as to be able to respond, like the Son of God, "*Here I come*" (Heb 10:7), or, like the prophet, "*Here I am, send me*" (Is 6:8).

In actual missionary practice, the catechist's vocation is both *specific*, i.e. for the task of catechizing, and *general*, for collaborating in whatever apostolic services are useful for the building up of the Church.¹⁰

The CEP insists on the value and distinctiveness of the catechist's vocation. Each one, therefore, should try to discover, discern and foster his or her own particular vocation.¹¹

From these premises it can be seen that catechists in mission territories have their own identity, which characterizes them in respect to those working in the older Churches, as the Church's magisterium and legislation clearly recognize.¹²

In short, the catechist in mission territories is identified by four elements: a call from the Holy Spirit; an ecclesial mis-

10 Guide for Catechists

sion; collaboration with the bishop's apostolic mandate; and a special link with missionary activity *ad gentes*.

3. Role

Closely linked to the question of identity is that of the role of the catechist in missionary activity, a role that is both important and many-sided. Apart from the explicit proclamation of the Christian message and the accompaniment of catechumens and newly baptized Christians on their road to full maturity in the faith and in sacramental life, the catechist's role comprises presence and witness, and involvement in human development, inculturation and dialogue.¹³

Thus the Church's Magisterium, when it speaks of catechists "*in mission lands*,"¹⁴ treats the subject as an important one and gives space to it. The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, for instance, describes catechists as "*specialized workers, direct witnesses, indispensable evangelizers, who represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young Churches*."¹⁵ The *Code of Canon Law* has a canon on catechists involved in strictly missionary activity and describes them as "*lay members of Christ's faithful who have received proper formation and are outstanding in their living of the Christian life. Under the direction of missionaries, they are to present the Gospel teaching and engage in liturgical worship and in works of charity*."¹⁶

This description of the catechist corresponds with that of the CEP in its 1970 Plenary Assembly: "*The catechist is a lay person specially appointed by the Church, in accordance with local needs, to make Christ known, loved and followed by those who do not yet know Him and by the faithful themselves*."¹⁷

To the catechist, as indeed to other members of the faithful, may be entrusted, in accordance with the canonical norms, certain functions of the sacred ministry which do not require the character of Holy Orders. The execution of these functions, when a priest is not available, does not make a pastor of the catechist, inasmuch as he or she derives legitimation directly from the official permission granted by the pastors.¹⁸ However, we may recall a clarification made in the past by the

CEP itself: in his or her ordinary activity, *"the catechist is not a simple substitute for the priest, but is, by right, a witness of Christ in the community."*¹⁹

4. Categories and tasks

Catechists in mission territories are not only different from those in older Churches, but among themselves vary greatly in characteristics and modes of action from one young Church to another, so that it is difficult to give a single description that would apply to all.

There are two main types of catechist: full-time catechists, who devote their life completely to this service and are officially recognized as such; and part-time catechists, who offer a more limited, but still precious, collaboration. The proportion between the two categories varies from place to place, but in general there are far more part-time than full-time catechists.

Various tasks are entrusted to both types of catechist, and it is in these tasks that one can see the great diversity that exists between different areas. The following outline would seem to give a realistic summary of the main functions entrusted to catechists in Churches dependent on the CEP:

- Catechists with the **specific task of catechizing**, which includes educating young people and adults in the faith, preparing candidates and their families for the sacraments of Christian initiation, and helping with retreats and other meetings connected with catechesis. Catechists with these functions are more numerous in Churches that have stressed the development of lay services.²⁰

- Catechists who **collaborate in different forms of apostolate** with ordained ministers, whose direction they willingly accept. The tasks entrusted to them are multiple: preaching to non-Christians; catechizing catechumens and those already baptized; leading community prayer, especially at the Sunday liturgy in the absence of a priest; helping the sick and presiding at funerals; training other catechists in special centers or guiding volunteer catechists in their work; taking charge of pastoral initiatives and organizing parish functions; helping the poor and working for human development and justice. This type

12 Guide for Catechists

of catechist is more common in places where parishes cover a large area with scattered communities far from the center, or where, because of a shortage of clergy, parish priests select lay leaders to help them."²¹

The dynamism of the young Churches and their socio-cultural situation give rise to other apostolic functions. For instance, there are *religion teachers* in schools, teaching both baptized and non-Christian students. These can be found in government schools, where the State allows religious instruction, as well as in Catholic schools. There are also *Sunday catechists*, who teach in Sunday schools organized by the parish, especially where the State does not allow religious instruction in its schools. And in large cities, especially in the poorer quarters, there are lay apostles doing excellent work among the destitute, immigrants, prisoners and others in need. Such functions are considered, according to the sensibilities and experience of the different Churches, as either proper to the catechist or as a general form of lay service to the Church and its mission. The CEP considers the multiplicity and variety of these tasks as an expression of the richness of the Spirit at work in the young Churches, and recommends them all to the attention of the bishops. It asks them to foster especially those that best respond to present needs and to the immediate future, in so far as this can be foreseen.

There is another consideration. Catechists may be old or young, male or female, married or single, and these factors should be taken into account in assigning tasks in the various cultural settings. Thus, a married man seems most indicated to be the community leader, especially in societies where men still have a dominant role. Women would seem to be the natural choice for educating the young and working for the Christian promotion of women. Married adults have greater stability and can give witness to the values of Christian marriage. The young, on the other hand, are to be preferred for contact with youth and for activities that take up more time.

Finally, one should bear in mind that, beside the lay catechists, there is a great number of religious men and women, who carry out catechesis and, because of their special consecration, are able to bear a unique witness in the capacity of their

mission and consequently are called to be available and prepared in their own way for this task. In practice they take on many of the tasks of the catechist and, because of their close cooperation with the priests, often play a directing role. The CEP, therefore, strongly recommends the involvement of religious men and women, as is already the practice in many places, in this important sector of ecclesial life, especially in the training and guidance of catechists.²²

5. Prospects for development in the near future

The tendency in general, and one which the CEP approves of and encourages, is for the figure of **the catechist as such to be affirmed and developed**, independently of the tasks he or she performs. The value of catechists and their influence on the apostolate are always decisive for the Church's mission.²³

Basing itself on its own worldwide experience, the CEP offers the following suggestions to help promote reflection on this subject:

- **Absolute precedence must be given to quality.** A common problem is certainly the scarcity of properly trained candidates. The character of the catechist is of prime importance, and this must influence the criteria for selection and the program for training and guidance. The words of the Holy Father are illuminating: *"For such a fundamental evangelical service a great number of workers are necessary. But, while striving for numbers, we must aim above all today at securing the quality of the catechist."*²⁴

- In view of the present impetus towards a **renewed mission ad gentes**,²⁵ the future of the catechist in the young Churches will certainly be marked by missionary zeal. Catechists, therefore, should be ever more fully qualified as lay pioneers of the apostolate. In the future, as in the past, they should be distinguished by their indispensable contribution to missionary activity ad gentes.

- It is not enough to fix an objective, but **suitable means must be chosen** for attaining the goal, and this holds true also for the training of catechists. Concrete programs should be drawn up, adequate structures and financial support provided,

14 Guide for Catechists

and qualified formators secured, so as to provide the catechists with a solid formation. Obviously the scale of the facilities and the level of study will vary according to the real possibilities of each Church, but certain standards should be attained by all, without giving in to difficulties.

- **The cadres in charge to be strengthened.** Everywhere there should be at least a few professional catechists who have been trained in suitable centers and who, placed in key posts of the catechetical organization under the direction of their pastors, see to the preparation of new candidates, introduce them to their functions and guide them in their work. These cadres should be found at all levels—parish, diocesan and national—and will be a guarantee of the good functioning of such an important sector of the Church's life.

- The CEP expects that in the near future the work of catechists will be still further developed, and we should try to see from now **how tomorrow's protagonists will act.**

Special encouragement will be given to catechists with **a marked missionary spirit**, who *"will themselves become missionary animators in their ecclesial communities and would be willing, if the Spirit so calls them and their Pastors commission them, to go outside their own territory to preach the gospel, prepare catechumens for baptism and build new ecclesial communities."*²⁶

Catechists who are involved in the catechesis will have a developing future, because the young Churches are multiplying the services of the lay apostolate, which are distinct from those of the catechists.²⁷ Hence it will be of great use to have **specialized** catechists, for instance, those who promote christian life where the majority of the people are already baptized but where the level of religious instruction and of the life of faith is not high. Catechists should also be trained for challenges which already face us today and will become even greater in future: urbanization, increasing numbers going on to third-level education, the world of youngsters, migrants and refugees, growing secularization, political changes, the influence of the mass media, etc.

The CEP draws attention to these future prospects and the need to face up to them, while realizing that it is up to the

local pastors to see how best to go about it. Episcopal Conferences and individual bishops should draw up a program for the preparation of catechists for the future, giving special attention to the missionary dimension in both their training and activity. These programs should not be vague, but specific and adapted to local conditions, so that each Church will have both the catechists it needs today and those that will be necessary in the near future.

II. The Catechist's Spirituality

6. Necessity and nature of spirituality for the catechist

Catechists must have a deep spirituality, i.e. they must live in the Spirit, who will help them to renew themselves continually in their specific identity.

The need for a spirituality proper to catechists springs from their vocation and mission. It includes, therefore, a new and special motivation, a call to sanctity. Pope John Paul II's saying: "*The true missionary is the saint*,"²⁸ can be applied without hesitation to the catechist. Like every member of the faithful, catechists are "*called to holiness and to mission*,"²⁹ i.e. to live out their own vocation "*with the fervor of the saints*."³⁰ Their spirituality is closely bound up with their status as lay Christians, made participants, in their own degree, in Christ's prophetic, priestly and kingly offices. As members of the laity, they are involved in the secular world and have, "*according to the condition of each, the special obligation to permeate and perfect the temporal order of things with the spirit of the gospel. In this way, particularly in conducting secular business and exercising secular functions, they are to give witness to Christ*."³¹

For **married catechists**, matrimonial life forms an integral part of their spirituality. As the Pope justly affirms, "*married catechists are expected to bear witness constantly to the Christian value of matrimony, living the sacrament in full fidelity and educating their children with a sense of responsibility*."³² This matrimonial spirituality can have great impact on their

16 Guide for Catechists

activity, and it would be good for them to involve their spouse and children in the work, so that the whole family radiates apostolic witness.

Catechists' spirituality is also conditioned by their apostolic vocation, and therefore should bear the marks of: openness to God's word, to the Church and to the world; authenticity of life; missionary zeal; and devotion to Mary.

7. Openness to the Word

The office of catechist is basically that of communicating God's word, and so the fundamental spiritual attitude should be one of openness to this word, contained in revelation, preached by the Church, celebrated in the liturgy and lived out in the lives of saints.³³ This is always an encounter with Christ, hidden in his word, in the eucharist and in our brothers and sisters. Openness to the word means openness to God, to the Church and to the world.

- **Openness to God *Uno et Trino***, who is in the most intimate depths of each person and gives meaning to his or her life: convictions, criteria, scale of values, decisions, relationships, behavior etc. Catechists should allow themselves to be drawn into the circle of the Father, who communicates the word; of the Son, the incarnate Word, who speaks only the words He hears from the Father (cf. *Jn* 8:26; 12:49); and of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the mind to help it understand God's words and opens the heart to receive them with love and put them into practice (cf. *Jn* 16:12-14).

It is a spirituality, therefore, that is rooted in the living word of God, with a Trinitarian dimension, like the universal mission itself with its offer of salvation. It requires a corresponding interior attitude which shares in the love of the Father, who wishes that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (cf. *1 Tim* 2:4); which seeks communion with Christ, so as to share his own "*mind*" (*Phil* 2:5) and experience, like Paul, his comforting presence: "*Do not be afraid . . . because I am with you*" (*Acts* 18:9-10); which allows oneself to be molded by the Spirit and transformed into a courageous witness of Christ and enlightened preacher of the word.³⁴

- **Openness to the Church**, of which catechists are living members, which they strive to build up, and from which they receive their mandate. The word is entrusted to the Church, so that it may keep it faithfully, deepen its understanding of it with the help of the Holy Spirit, and proclaim it to the whole world.³⁵

As People of God and the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church requires from catechists a deep sense of belonging and responsibility, inasmuch as they are living and active members of it; as universal sacrament of salvation, it elicits the will to live its mystery and its manifold grace so as to be enriched by it and become a visible sign to the community. The catechist's service is never an individual or isolated act, but is always deeply ecclesial.

Openness to the Church expresses itself by filial love, dedication to its service and a willingness to suffer for its cause. In particular, it is expressed in the attachment and obedience to the Roman Pontiff, the center of unity and the bond of universal communion, so also to the bishop, the father and guide of the particular Church. Catechists should share responsibly in the earthly vicissitudes of the pilgrim Church, which is by nature missionary,³⁶ and aspire with it towards the final reunion with Christ the Spouse.

The ecclesial sense that is proper to the catechist's spirituality expresses itself, therefore, in sincere love of the Church, in imitation of Christ, who "*loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her.*" It is an active and total love which becomes a sharing in the Church's mission of salvation to the point even of giving one's life for it if necessary.³⁷

- **Missionary openness to the world**, finally—the world which is offered the salvation that springs from "*that fountain of love or charity within God the Father*";³⁸ the world in which historically God's Word came to live among us to redeem us (cf. *Jn* 1:14), and in which the Holy Spirit was poured out to sanctify men and women and gather them into the Church, to have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit (cf. *Eph* 2:18).³⁹

Catechists, therefore, will be open and attentive to the needs of the world, knowing that they are called to work in and for the world, without however belonging completely to it (cf.

18 Guide for Catechists

Jn 17:14-21). This means that they must be thoroughly involved in the life of the society about them, without pulling back from fear of difficulties or withdrawing through love of tranquillity. But they must keep a supernatural outlook on life and trust in the efficacy of God's word, which does not return to Him without "*succeeding in what it was sent to do*" (Is 55:11).

Openness to the world is a characteristic of the catechist's spirituality in virtue of the apostolic love of Jesus the Good Shepherd, who came "*to gather together in unity the scattered children of God*" (Jn 11:52). Catechists must be filled with this love, bringing it to their brothers and sisters as they preach to them that God loves and offers his salvation to all.⁴⁰

8. Coherence and authenticity of life

The work of catechists involves their whole being. Before they preach the word, they must make it their own and live by it.⁴¹ "*The world (. . .) needs evangelizers who speak of a God that they know and who is familiar to them, as if they saw the Invisible.*"⁴²

What catechists teach should not be a purely human science nor the sum of their personal opinions but the Church's faith, which is the same throughout the world, which they themselves live and whose witnesses they are.⁴³

Hence the need for coherence and authenticity of life. Before *doing* the catechesis one must first of all *be* a catechist. The *truth* of their lives confirms their message. It would be sad if they did not "*practice what they preached*" and spoke about a God of whom they had theoretical knowledge but with whom they had no contact. They should apply to themselves the words of St. Mark concerning the vocation of the apostles: "*He appointed twelve, to be his companions and to be sent out to preach*" (Mk 3:14-15).

Authenticity of life means a life of prayer, experience of God and fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit. It implies a certain intensity and an internal and external orderliness, adapted to the various personal and family situations of each. It might be objected that catechists, being members of the laity, cannot have a structured spiritual life like that of religious and that therefore

they must content themselves with something less. But in every life situation, whether one is engaged in secular work or in the ministry, it is possible for everyone, priest, religious or lay person, to attain a high degree of communion with God and an ordered rhythm of prayer, including the finding of times of silence for entering more deeply into the contemplation of God. The more intense and real one's spiritual life is, the more convincing and efficacious will one's witness and activity be.

It is also important for catechists that they grow inter-iorly in the peace and joy of Christ, so that they may be examples of hope and courage (cf *Rom 12:12*). For Christ "*is our peace*" (*Eph 2:14*). and he gives his apostles his joy that their "*joy may be full*" (*Jn 15:11*).

Catechists, therefore, should be bearers of paschal joy and hope, in the name of the Church. In fact, "*the most precious gift that the Church can offer to the bewildered and restless world of our time is to form within it Christians who are confirmed in what is essential and who are humbly joyful in their faith.*"⁴⁴

9. Missionary zeal

In view of their baptism and special vocation, catechists who live in daily contact with large numbers of non-Christians, as is the case in mission territories, cannot but feel moved by Christ's words: "*Other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these too I must lead*" (*Jn 10:16*); "*go out to the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature*" (*Mk 16:15*). To be able to affirm, like Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, "*we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard*" (*Acts 4:20*), and to realize with Paul the ideal of apostolic ministry: "*the love of Christ overwhelms us*" (*2 Cor 5:14*), catechists should have a strong missionary spirit—a spirit that will be all the more effective if they are seen to be convinced of what they say and are enthusiastic and courageous, without ever being ashamed of the gospel (cf. *Rom 1:16*). While the wise ones according to this world seek immediate gratification, the catechist will glory only in Christ, who gives strength (cf *Col 1:29*), and will wish to know and preach only "*Christ the power of God and the wisdom*

20 Guide for Catechists

of God" (1 Cor 1:24). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rightly affirms, from "*the loving knowledge of Christ springs out the irresistible desire to announce, to 'evangelize' and to lead others to the 'yes' of the faith in Jesus Christ. At the same time, one also feels the need to know this faith ever better.*"⁴⁵

Catechists will try to be like the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep "*until he finds it*" (Lk 15:4), or like the woman with the lost drachma who would "*search thoroughly until she had found it*" (Lk 15:8). Their convictions should be a source of **apostolic zeal**: "*I have made myself all things to all in order to save some at any cost. I do it all for the sake of the gospel*" (1 Cor 9:22-23; cf. 2 Cor 12:15). And again St. Paul says: "*Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel*" (1 Cor 9:16). The burning zeal of St. Paul should inspire catechists to stir up their own zeal, which should be the response to their vocation, and which will help them to preach Christ boldly and work actively for the growth of the ecclesial community.⁴⁶

Finally, one should not forget that the stamp of authenticity on the missionary spirit is that of the cross. The Christ whom catechists have come to know is "*a crucified Christ*" (1 Cor 2:2); he whom they preach is "*Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles*" (1 Cor 1:23), whom the Father raised from the dead on the third day (cf Acts 10:40). They should be prepared, therefore, to live in hope the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ in the midst of difficult situations, personal suffering, family problems and obstacles in their apostolic work, as they strive to follow the Lord on his own difficult road: "*in my own body I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, the Church*" (Col 1:24).⁴⁷

10. Devotion to Mary

Through her own special vocation. Mary saw the Son of God "*grow in wisdom, in age and in grace*" (Lk 2:52). She was the teacher who "*trained Him in human knowledge of the Scriptures and of God's loving plan for his people, and in adoration of the Father.*"⁴⁸ She was also "*the first of his disciples.*"⁴⁹ As St. Augustine boldly affirmed, to be his disciple was

more important for Mary than to be his mother.⁵⁰ One can say with reason and joy that Mary is a "living catechism," "mother and model of catechists."⁵¹

The spirituality of catechists, like that of every Christian and especially those involved in the apostolate, will be enriched by a deep devotion to the Mother of God. Before explaining to others the place of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church,⁵² they should have her present in their own soul and should give evidence of a sincere Marian piety,⁵³ which they will communicate to the community. They will find in Mary a simple and effective model, for themselves and others: "*The Virgin Mary in her own life lived an example of that maternal love by which all should be fittingly animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church on behalf of the rebirth of humanity.*"⁵⁴

The preaching of the word is always connected with prayer, the celebration of the eucharist and the building of community. The earliest Christian community was a model of this (cf. *Acts* 2-4), united around Mary the mother of Jesus (cf. *Acts* 1:14)

III. The Catechist's Attitude to Some Contemporary Issues

11. Service to the community as a whole and to particular groups

There are various groups in the community that may require the services of catechists: young people and adults, men and women students and workers, Catholics, other Christians and non-Christians. It is not the same thing to be a catechist for catechumens preparing for baptism as to be community leader for a village of Catholics, with responsibility for various pastoral activities, or to be a religion teacher in a school, or to be charged with preparing people for the sacraments, or to be assigned to pastoral work in an inner-city area, etc.

Catechists will try to promote communication and

22 Guide for Catechists

communion between the members of the community, and will devote themselves to the groups committed to their care, trying to understand their particular needs so as to help them as much as possible. As the needs differ from group to group, so the training of catechists will have to be adapted for the groups envisaged. It would be useful, therefore, for catechists to know in advance the sort of work they will be called to and make acquaintance with the groups concerned. Some useful suggestions in connection with this have already been offered by the Magisterium, especially in the *General Catechetical Directory*, nos. 77-97, and the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, nos. 34-35.

Special attention should be paid to the **sick and aged**, because their physical and psychological weakness calls for greater charity and concern.⁵⁵

The sick should be helped to understand the redemptive value of the cross,⁵⁶ in union with Jesus, who took upon himself the weight of our infirmities (cf. *Mt* 8:17; *Is* 53:4). Catechists should visit them frequently, offering them the comfort of God's word and, when commissioned to do so, the eucharist.

The aged too should be followed with special care, for they have an important role in the community, as Pope John Paul II recognizes when he calls them "*witnesses of the tradition of faith* (cf. *Ps* 44:1, *Ex* 12:26-27), *teachers of wisdom* (cf. *Sir* 6:34; 8:11-12), *workers of charity*."⁵⁷ Families should be encouraged to keep their elderly members with them, to "*bear witness to the past and instill wisdom in the young*."⁵⁸ The aged should feel the support of the whole community and should be helped to bear in faith their inevitable limitations and, in certain cases, their solitude. Catechists will prepare them for their meeting with the Lord and help them experience the joy that comes from our hope in eternal life.⁵⁹

Catechists will also show sensitivity in dealing with people in difficult situations such as those in irregular marriages, the children of broken marriages, etc. They must be able to share in and express the immense compassion of the heart of Jesus (cf. *Mt* 9:36; *Mk* 6-34; 8:2; *Lk* 7:13).

12. Need for inculturation

Like all forms of evangelization, catechesis too is called to bring the gospel into the heart of the different cultures.⁶⁰ The process of inculturation takes time, as it is a deep, gradual and all-embracing process. Through it, as Pope John Paul II explains, *"the Church makes the gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community; she transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within."*⁶¹

Catechists, like all missionary personnel, will play an active part in this process. They should be specifically prepared for it, with courses on the elements of cultural anthropology and on their own culture, and should be aware of the guidelines that the Church has laid down on this matter⁶² and which may be summarized as follows:

- The gospel message, though it can never be identified with any one culture, is necessarily incarnated in cultures. From its very beginnings it was incarnated in certain specific cultures, and one must take account of this if one is not to deprive the new Churches of values which are now the patrimony of the universal Church.

- The gospel is a force for renewal, and can rectify elements in cultures which do not conform to it.

- The local ecclesial communities, which are the primary subjects of inculturation, live out their daily experience of faith and charity in a particular culture, and the bishop should indicate the best ways to bring out the positive values in that culture. The experts give incentive and support.

- Inculturation is genuine when it is guided by two principles: it must be founded on the word of God, revealed in the Scriptures, and must follow the Church's tradition and the guidance of the Magisterium; and it must never go against the Church unity that was willed by the Lord.

- Popular piety, understood as an expression of Catholic devotion colored by local values, traditions and attitudes, when purified of defects caused by ignorance and superstition, expresses the wisdom of God's people and is a privileged form of

24 Guide for Catechists

inculturation of the gospel.⁶³

Following the above directives, catechists should contribute to inculturation by fitting into the overall pastoral plan drawn up by the competent authorities and avoiding adventures into particular experiments that might upset the faithful. They should be convinced that the gospel is strong enough to penetrate any culture and enrich and strengthen it from within.

13. Human development and option for the poor

There is a "close connection" between the preaching of the gospel and the promotion of human development.⁶⁴ They are both included in the Church's mission. *"Through the gospel message, the Church offers a force for liberation which promotes development precisely because it leads to conversion of heart and of ways of thinking, fosters the recognition of each person's dignity, encourages solidarity, commitment and service of one's neighbor, and gives everyone a place in God's plan, which is the building of his kingdom of peace and justice, beginning already in this life. This is the biblical perspective of the new heavens and a new earth (cf: Is 65:17, 2 Pt 3:13, Rev 21:1, which has been the stimulus and goal for humanity's advancement in history)."*⁶⁵

It is well known that the Church claims for itself a mission of a "religious"⁶⁶ nature, but this has to take place, to be incarnated, in the real life and history of humanity.

To take the values of the gospel into the economic, social and political fields is a task especially for the laity.⁶⁷ Catechists have an important role in the field of human development and the promotion of justice. Living as lay people in society, they can well understand, interpret and try to bring solutions to personal and social problems in the light of the gospel. They should therefore be close to the people, help them to understand the realities of social life so as to try to improve it, and, when necessary, they should have the courage to speak out for the weak and defend their rights.

When it is necessary to take practical initiatives in this area, they should act in union with the community, in a program

drawn up with the approval of the bishop.

Connected with human development is the question of the **preferential option for the poor**. Catechists, especially those engaged in the general apostolate, have a duty to make this ecclesial option, which does not mean that they are interested only in the poor, but that these should have a prior claim on their attention. The foundation of their interest in the poor must be love, for, as Pope John Paul II explicitly says, "*love has been and remains the driving force of mission*."⁶⁸

By the poor should be understood especially the materially poor, who are so numerous in many mission territories. These brothers and sisters of Christ should be able to feel the Church's maternal love for them, even when they do not yet belong to it, so as to be encouraged to accept and overcome their difficulties with the help of Christian faith and themselves become agents of their own integral development. The Church's charitable activity, like all pastoral activity, "*brings light and an impulse towards true development*" to the poor.⁶⁹

Apart from the financially deprived, catechists should pay special attention also to other groups in need: those who are oppressed, persecuted or marginalized, the handicapped, the unemployed, prisoners, refugees, drug addicts, those suffering from AIDS, etc.⁷⁰

14. Spirit of ecumenism

Discord among Christians "*openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature*."⁷¹

All Christian communities should "*participate in ecumenical dialogue and in other initiatives designed to promote Christian unity*."⁷² In mission territories this task assumes special urgency so that Jesus' prayer to his Father should not be in vain: "*may they be one in us... so that the world may believe it was you who sent me*" (Jn 17:21).⁷³

Catechists, by their very mission, are necessarily involved in this aspect of the apostolate and should promote an ecumenical spirit in the community, beginning with the cate-

26 Guide for Catechists

chumens and newly baptized.⁷⁴ They should have a deep desire for Christian unity, should willingly engage in dialogue with Christians of other denominations, and should commit themselves generously to ecumenical initiatives,⁷⁵ keeping to their particular role and following the Church's directives as specified by the Episcopal Conference and the local bishop.⁷⁶ Their catechetical activity, therefore, and their teaching of religion in schools should instill an openness to ecumenical cooperation.⁷⁷

Their activity will be truly ecumenical if they can both courageously *"teach that the fullness of the revealed truths and of the means of salvation instituted by Christ is found in the Catholic Church"*⁷⁸ and also *"give a correct and fair presentation of the other Churches and ecclesial communities that the Spirit of Christ does not refrain from using as means of salvation"*.⁷⁹

They should try to have good relations with catechists and leaders of other denominations, in accord with their Pastors and, when so charged, as their representatives. They should avoid stirring up useless rivalries; should help the faithful to live in harmony with and respect for Christians of other denominations, while fully maintaining their own Catholic identity; and should join other believers in working for peace.⁸⁰

15. Dialogue with those of other religions

Inter-religious dialogue forms part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Like preaching, it is also a way of making Christ known, and it is essential that the Catholic Church maintain good relations and contact with those of other faiths. It should be a **saving dialogue**, approached in the spirit of Christ himself.

Catechists, with their task of communicating the faith, should be open to this kind of dialogue and be trained to take part in it. They should be taught to realize its value and put it into practice in accordance with the guidelines of the Magisterium, especially those of *Redemptoris Missio*, of the subsequent document *Dialogue and Proclamation*, which was drawn up jointly by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, and the CEP, and of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁸¹ These guidelines include:

- **Listening to the Spirit**, who blows where He wills (cf. *Jn 3:8*); respecting his work in souls; and striving for inner purification, without which dialogue cannot bear fruit.⁸²

- **Accurate knowledge** of the religions practiced in the area: their history and organization; the values in them which, like "*seeds of the Word*," can be a "*preparation for the gospel*";⁸³ their limitations and errors which are not in conformity with the gospel and which should be respectively completed and corrected.

- **A conviction** that salvation comes from Christ and that, therefore, dialogue does not dispense one from proclamation,⁸⁴ that the Church is the ordinary way of salvation and that only she possesses the fullness of revealed truth and salvific means.⁸⁵ As Pope John Paul II confirmed, while referring to *Redemptoris Missio*: "*One cannot place on the same level God's revelation in Christ and the scriptures or traditions of other religions. A theocentrism which did not recognize Christ in his full identity would be unacceptable to the Catholic Faith. (. . .) Christ's missionary command remains permanently valid and is an explicit call to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them, in order to bring them the fullness of God's gift.*"⁸⁶ Dialogue should not, therefore, lead to religious relativism.

- **Practical cooperation** with non-Christian religious bodies in facing the great challenges to humanity such as the bringing about of peace, justice, development etc.⁸⁷ There should always be an attitude of esteem and openness towards persons. God is the Father of all, and it is his love that should unite the human family in working for good.

In taking part in such dialogue, catechists should not be left on their own but should be integrated in the community. Initiatives in this area should be undertaken in the context of programs approved by the bishop and, when necessary, by the Episcopal Conference or the Holy See. Catechists should not act unilaterally, and especially should do nothing against the norms laid down. Finally, one should continue to believe in dialogue, even when it seems difficult or misunderstood. In certain conditions, it is indeed the only way to bear witness to Christ; it is always "*a path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear*

fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father" (cf. Acts 1:7).⁸⁸

16. Attention to the spread of sects

The rapid spread of sects of both Christian and non-Christian origin presents a pastoral challenge for the Church throughout the world today. In mission territories they are a serious obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and the orderly growth of the young Churches because they damage the integrity of faith and communion.⁸⁹

Certain regions and persons are more vulnerable and more exposed to the influence of these sects. What the sects offer seems to work in their favor as they present apparently simple and immediate answers to the felt needs of the people, and the means they use are adapted to local sensibilities and cultures.⁹⁰

As is well known, the Church's Magisterium has often given warnings about the dangers posed by sects, and called for "*serious reflection*" in view of their rapid spread.⁹¹ Rather than a positive campaign against them, however, what is called for in mission territories is a renewal of mission itself.⁹²

Catechists would seem to be particularly suitable for counteracting the influence of the sects. As they have the task of teaching the faith and of fostering the growth of Christian life, they can help both Christians and non-Christians understand what the real answers to their needs are, without having recourse to the pseudo-securities of the sects. Also, being members of the laity, they are closer to the people and can know their direct and lived situations.

The preferential work-lines for the catechists should be: to study first of all what exactly the sects teach and the points on which they particularly attack the Church, so as to be able to point out the inconsistencies in their position; to forestall their encroachment by giving positive instruction and encouraging the Christian community to greater fervor; and to proclaim clearly the Christian message. They should give personal attention to people and their problems, helping them to clarify doubts and to be wary of the specious promises of the sects.

It must not be forgotten that many of the sects are intolerant and are particularly hostile to Catholicism. Constructive dialogue is often not possible with them, even though here too one must have respect and understanding for persons. The Church's position must be made clear in this and also in an ecumenical way, for the spread of the sects poses a danger to the other Christian denominations as well.⁹³ Here, as in other areas, catechists should remain firmly within the common pastoral program approved by the Church authorities.⁹⁴

PART II

CHOICE AND FORMATION OF CATECHISTS

IV. Choice of Candidates

17. Importance of a proper choice

It is difficult to lay down rules as to the level of faith and the strength of motivation that a candidate should have in order to be accepted for training as a catechist. Among the reasons for this are: the varying levels of religious maturity in the different ecclesial communities, the scarcity of suitable and available personnel, socio-political conditions, poor educational standards and financial difficulties. But one should not give in to the difficulties and lower one's standards.

The CEP insists on the principle that a good choice of candidates is essential. Right from the beginning, a **high quality** must be set. Pastors should be convinced of this as the goal to be aimed at and, even though it may be achieved only gradually, they should not easily settle for less. They should also prepare the community, and especially the young, by explaining the role of catechists, so as to awaken an interest in this form of ecclesial service. It should not be forgotten either that the community's esteem for this service will be directly proportional to the way in which pastors treat their catechists, giving them worthwhile tasks and respecting their responsibility. A fulfilled, responsible and dynamic catechist, working enthusiastically and joyfully in the tasks assigned,⁹⁵ appreciated and properly remunerated, is the best promoter of other vocations.

18. Criteria for selection

In choosing candidates, some criteria should be considered essential while others might be optional. It is useful to have a list of criteria for the whole Church, which could be referred

to by those with the charge of choosing candidates. These criteria, which should be *sufficient, precise, realistic* and *controllable*, could be adapted to local conditions by the local authorities, who are the ones best able to judge the needs and possibilities of the community.

The following general considerations should be kept in mind, so that there may be a common policy in all mission areas while respecting inevitable differences.

- Some criteria concern the **catechist's person**. A basic rule is that no one should be accepted as a candidate unless he or she is positively motivated and is not seeking the post simply because another suitable job is not available. Positive qualities in candidates should be: faith that manifests itself in their piety and daily life; love for the Church and communion with its pastors; apostolic spirit and missionary zeal; love for their brothers and sisters and a willingness to give generous service; sufficient education: the respect of the community; the human, moral and technical qualities necessary for the work of a catechist, such as dynamism, good relations with others, etc.

- Other criteria concern the actual **process of selection**. As it is a question of ecclesial service, the decision belongs to the pastor, which in this case usually means the parish priest, but the community should be involved in the proposal of candidates and their evaluation. At a later stage, the parish priest should present the candidates chosen to the bishop or his representative, to confirm the choice and eventually give them their official mandate.

- There should also be special criteria for the **acceptance of candidates in catechetical centers**. Apart from the general criteria, each center, in keeping with its character, will have its own requirements concerning the level of scholastic achievement needed for entry, its conditions for participation, its formation program, etc.

These general guidelines will have to be made more specific for local conditions and applied to the particular circumstances in each area.

V. Process of Formation

19. Need for proper formation

In order to have a sufficient number of suitable catechists for the communities, besides a careful selection, it is indispensable to stress on the training to which the quality is connected. This has often been stressed by the Magisterium, because every apostolic activity *"which is not supported by properly trained persons is condemned to failure."*⁹⁶

The relevant documents of the Magisterium require both a general and a specific formation for catechists: general, in the sense that their whole character and personality should be developed; and specific, with a view to the particular tasks they will be charged with in a supplementary way: preaching the word to both Christians and non-Christians, leading the community, presiding when necessary at liturgical prayers, and helping in various ways those in spiritual or material need. As Pope John Paul II said: *"To set high standards means both to provide a thorough basic training and to keep it constantly updated. This is a fundamental duty, in order to ensure qualified personnel for the Church's mission, with good training programs and adequate structures, providing for all aspects of formation—human, spiritual, doctrinal, apostolic and professional."*⁹⁷

It will be a demanding training program therefore, both for the candidates and for those who have to provide it. The CEP entrusts its realization to the bishops as part of their pastoral task.⁹⁸

20. Unity and harmony in the personality of catechist

In living out their vocation, catechists, like all members of the Catholic laity. *"must be formed according to the union which exists from their being members of the Church and citizens of human society."*⁹⁹ There cannot be separate parallel lives: a *"spiritual"* life with its values and demands, a *"secular"* life with its various forms of expression, and an *"apostolic"* life with its

own requirements.¹⁰⁰

To bring about unity and harmony in one's personality, certain obstacles of a temperamental, intellectual or emotional nature must first of all be overcome, and an ordered life style established. But what will be decisive will be the ability to reach into the depths of one's soul and find there the principle and source of the catechist's identity, namely the person of Christ himself.

The first and essential object of catechesis is, of course, the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten of the Father, "*full of grace and truth*" (Jn 1:14), "*the way, the truth and the life*" (Jn 14:6). It is the "*mystery of Christ*" (Eph 3:4) in its integrity "*hidden for generations and generations*" (Col 1:26), which must be revealed. It follows that the catechists' concern should be to transmit, through their teaching and behavior, the doctrine and life of Christ. Their mode of being and of working should depend entirely on that of Christ. The unity and harmony in their personalities should be Christocentric, built upon "*a deep intimacy with Christ and with the Father,*" in the Spirit.¹⁰¹ This cannot be too strongly insisted upon, when there is question of the catechist's role and importance in these decisive times for the Church's mission.

21. Human maturity

From the beginning it should be clear that the candidate possesses basic human qualities that can be further developed. What is to be aimed at is a person with human maturity suitable for a responsible role in the community.

The following qualities should be taken into consideration: in the **purely human sphere**: psychophysical equilibrium: good health, a sense of responsibility, honesty, dynamism; good professional and family conduct; a spirit of sacrifice, strength, perseverance, etc.; with a view to the **functions of a catechist**: good human relations, ability to dialogue with those of other religions, grasp of one's own culture, ability to communicate, willingness to work with others, leadership qualities, balanced judgement, openness of mind, a sense of realism, a capacity to transmit consolation and hope, etc.; with a view to **particular**

34 *Guide for Catechists*

situations or roles: aptitudes for working in the fields of peacemaking, development, socio-cultural promotion, justice, health care, etc.

The aim of catechetical formation will be to build on the human qualities already present, to develop them and add the necessary skills for a fruitful ministry.

22. Deep spiritual life

To be able to educate others in the faith, catechists should themselves have a deep spiritual life. This is the most important aspect of their personality and therefore the one to be most stressed in formation. The real catechist is a saint.¹⁰² Their spiritual life should be based on a communion of faith and love with the person of Jesus, who calls them and sends them on his mission.¹⁰³ Like Jesus, the only Master (cf. *Mt* 23:8),¹⁰⁴ catechists serve their brothers and sisters by their teaching and works (cf. *Acts* 1:1), which are manifestations of love. To do the will of their Father, which is an act of salvific love for others, is their food, as it was that of Jesus (cf. *Jn* 4:34). Sanctity of life, lived as a lay apostle,¹⁰⁵ is the ideal to be striven for. Spiritual formation should be a process of listening "*to Him who is the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work—the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit.*"¹⁰⁶

The best way to attain this interior maturity is an intense sacramental and prayer life.¹⁰⁷

Basing itself on the actual experiences of catechists, the CEP proposes the following practices as key elements in the prayer life at least of the catechists who guide the community in a supplementary way, full-time catechists and those working closely with the parish priest, especially of the *cadres*:

- Regular, even daily, **reception of the Eucharist**, so as to nourish oneself with the "*bread of life*" (*Jn* 6:34), to form "*a single body*" with the community (cf. *1 Cor* 10:17) and offer oneself to the Father along with the Lord's body and blood.¹⁰⁸

- **Lived liturgy** in its various dimensions for the personal growth and for the help of the community.¹⁰⁹

- Recital of part of the **Divine Office**, especially Lauds and Vespers, in union with the song of praise that the Church

addresses to the Father "from the rising of the sun to its setting" (Ps 113:3).¹¹⁰

- Daily **meditation**, especially on the word of God, in an attitude of contemplation and response; experience shows that, even for lay people, regular meditation and *lectio divina* bring order to one's life and guarantee spiritual growth.¹¹¹

- **Personal prayer**, which ensures contact with God during one's daily occupations, with special attention to Marian prayer.

- Frequent reception of the **sacrament of penance**, to ask pardon for faults committed and renew one's fervor.¹¹²

- Participation in **spiritual retreats**, for personal and community renewal.

It is through such a life of prayer that catechists will enrich their interior life and attain the spiritual maturity required by their role. Prayer is also necessary for their ministry to be fruitful, for communication of the Christian faith depends less on the catechist's ability than on God's grace working in the hearts of those who hear the message.¹¹³

If a sufficient number of suitable candidates cannot be found, there may be a risk of settling for catechists who are not spiritual enough, but the CEP would not encourage such pragmatic solutions, for mission in the world today requires that the catechist hold a place of honor in the Church.

To help catechists in their spiritual life, **spiritual direction** should be made available. Dioceses are encouraged to name specific priests to interest themselves in the catechists and their work and provide spiritual guidance. But it is important that each catechist should choose a personal spiritual director from among the priests who are easily accessible. Parish priests in particular should be close to their catechists and help them even more in their spiritual growth than in their work.

Also to be encouraged are parish or diocesan initiatives for catechists, such as prayer groups days of recollection together, or spiritual retreats, which will help them to share with each other on a spiritual level.

Catechists should also realize that the Christian community itself is a place where they can cultivate their own interior life. While they lead others in prayer, they will receive from

36 *Guide for Catechists*

them a stimulus and example to maintain their own fervor and grow in apostolic spirit.

23. Doctrinal training

The need for doctrinal training is obvious, as catechists must first understand the essentials of Christian doctrine before they can communicate it to others in a clear and interesting way, without omissions or error.

All candidates should have attained a certain level of education, in keeping with the standards of the country. As mentioned above, there can be problems where the general standard is not high, but facile solutions should be resisted. On the contrary, standards for admission should be above average, as candidates should be able to follow a course of "*higher religious education*." Without this, they would feel inferior to those who have done higher studies and would be ill at ease in educated circles and unable to face certain issues.

As for the contents of the course, they should be based on the program for "*doctrinal, anthropological and methodological formation*" presented in the *General Catechetical Directory*, published by the Congregation for the Clergy in 1971.¹¹⁴ For mission territories, however, there should be certain adaptations and additions, as the CEP had indicated in part at its 1970 Plenary Assembly and which it now summarizes and develops on the basis of the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*:

- In view of the specific aims of missionary activity, the doctrinal formation of catechists will be based especially on theology of Trinity, Christology and Ecclesiology, presented in a systematic and progressive synthesis of the Christian message. As they have the task of making Christ known and loved, they will strive to know Him doctrinally and on a personal level; and in order to make the Church known and loved, they will study its tradition and history, and the witness of its great figures, the Church Fathers and the Saints.¹¹⁵

- The level of religious and theological training will vary from place to place and will also depend on whether it is given in a catechetical center or in short courses. A minimum standard, however, will be set by the Episcopal Conference or individual

bishops, to ensure that the training will qualify as *higher* religious education.

Sacred Scripture will always be the main field of study and will be the soul of the program. Around it will be structured the other branches of theology. It should be born in mind that the catechist must be qualified in the biblical pastoral, also in view of the comparison with the noncatholic confessions and with the sects which often use the Bible in an incorrect way.

- The main elements of Missiology will also be studied, as this is an important subject for the mission.

- Liturgy must also, obviously, be given a prominent place, as catechists are to be leaders of community prayer.

- According to local circumstances, it may be necessary to study the beliefs and practices of other religions or Christian denominations in the area.

- Attention should also be given to other subjects connected with local conditions: the inculturation of Christianity in the country or region; the promotion of justice and human development in the local socio-economic situation; the history of the country; the religious practices, language, problems and needs of the area in which the catechist is to work.

- Regarding the methodological training one should bear in mind that many catechists will be working in various pastoral fields, and almost all will be in contact with people of other religions, they will be taught not only how to teach the catechism but also how to go about the various tasks connected with the proclamation of the Christian message and the life of an ecclesial community.

- It will also be important to grant the catechist contents and materials connected to their new and emerging life situations. The programs of study, which have a starting point in the actual reality and from foresight, can also include subjects that help them to face the phenomena of urbanization, secularization, industrialization, emigration, socio-political changes, the world of youngsters, etc.

- In spite of the diversity of subjects, one should aim at a global and not compartmentalized theological formation, i.e. there should be an overall vision of faith that brings unity and harmony to the knowledge acquired, to the catechists' person-

38 *Guide for Catechists*

alities and to their apostolic service.

-At this point, it is necessary to emphasize the special importance the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* assumes for the doctrinal preparation of the catechists. In it, in fact, is contained an orderly synthesis of the Revelation and of the perennial catholic faith, as the Church would propose to herself and to the community of men of our time. As the Holy Father John Paul II affirms in the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum*, in the catechism there are "*new things and old things (cf Mt 13:52), since the faith is always the same and at the same time it is the source of the lights which are ever new.*" The service which the catechism aims at pertains and is relevant to each catechist. The same Apostolic Constitution attests that it is offered to the pastors and to the faithful, so that it may help them to fulfil, inside and outside the ecclesial community, "*their mission to announce the faith and to call to the evangelical life.*" Moreover, it "*is offered to each man who may ask us the reason for the hope in us (cf 1 Pt 3:15) and who may desire to know what the Church believes.*" There is no doubt that the catechists will find in the new Catechism a source of inspiration and a mine of knowledge for their specific mission.

Training courses for catechists are best given in centers built for this purpose. Where these are not available, shorter courses may be provided in other locations by dioceses or parishes, and individual instruction could be given by a priest or an expert catechist. The courses should include lectures, group discussions and practical exercises, as well as personal study and research.

To provide adequate training is not easy and will require personnel, structures and financial support. But, in view of the importance of catechists, the challenge should be faced courageously, with realistic and intelligent planning.

Catechists should dedicate themselves to their studies so as to become lamps to light the way of their brothers and sisters (cf. *Mt* 5:14-16). They should be joyful in their faith and hope (cf. *Phil* 3:1; *Rm* 12:12), with the wisdom to transmit the authentic teaching of the Church, in fidelity to the Magisterium, without disturbing consciences, and especially those of the

young, with theories that "are only likely to raise irrelevant doubts instead of furthering the designs of God which are revealed in faith" (1 Tim 1:4).¹¹⁶

They should submit their minds and hearts to Christ, who is the one Teacher, and be aware that "anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips."¹¹⁷

24. Pastoral spirit

The pastoral dimension of formation concerns the exercise of the prophetic, priestly and royal functions of the baptized lay person. Catechists will be taught, therefore, how to proclaim the Christian message and teach it, how to lead others in community and liturgical prayer, and how to carry out various other pastoral services.

Qualities to be developed for these tasks are: a spirit of pastoral responsibility and leadership; generosity, dynamism and creativity; ecclesial communion and obedience to pastors.

The **theoretical** part of the pastoral course will deal with the different types of pastoral work to be undertaken and also with the different groups of people to be addressed: children, adolescents, young people or adults; students or workers; baptized or unbaptized; healthy or sick; rich or poor; individuals or members of particular movements or groups, etc.

The **practical** part of the course will include practical exercises especially at the beginning, under the direction of the teacher or a priest or an experienced catechist.

Special attention will be paid to the sacraments, so that catechists will learn how to help the faithful to understand the religious meaning of these signs and approach them with faith in their supernatural efficacy. The sacrament of the anointing of the sick should not be forgotten, as catechists will often have to help the sick and dying to accept their sufferings in a spirit of faith.

For training in the specific field of catechesis, it would be well to consult the General Catechetical Directory, particularly the section on "*elements of methodology*."¹¹⁸

25. Missionary zeal

The missionary dimension is an essential part of a catechist's identity and work, and so should be given a prominent place in the formation program. Catechists should be taught, theoretically and practically, how to devote themselves as lay Christians to the missionary apostolate, which includes the following elements:

- Being **actively present** in society, offering true Christian witness, entering into sincere dialogue with others, and cooperating in charity to resolve common problems.¹¹⁹

- **Proclaiming boldly** (cf. *Acts* 4:13; 28:31) the truth about God and his Son Jesus Christ, whom He sent into the world for the salvation of all (cf. *2 Tim* 1:9-10), so that those of other religions whose hearts are opened by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts* 16:14) may be able to believe and be freely converted.¹²⁰

- **Meeting followers of other religions** in a spirit of openness and dialogue.

- **Introducing catechumens** to the mystery of salvation, the practice of evangelical norms and the religious, liturgical and community life of the People of God.¹²¹

- **Building community** and helping candidates prepare for the reception of baptism and the other sacraments of Christian initiation, as they become members of the Church of Christ, which is prophetic, priestly and royal.¹²²

- With dependence on the Pastors and in collaboration with the faithful, **fulfilling those practices**, which according to the pastoral design are destined to the maturing of the particular Church. These services are connected with various necessities of each Church and mark the catechist of the mission territories. As a result the formative activity must help the catechist to improve his own missionary sensibility, enabling him to discover and be involved in all the favorable situations at the first proclamation.

We have already quoted words of Pope John Paul II concerning catechists who are well trained in a missionary spirit and who themselves become **missionary animators** in their community, work for the evangelization of non-Christians, and are willing to do so outside of their own region or nation when sent by their pastors. Pastors will make the most of these zealous apostles and encourage them in their missionary work.

26. Attitude to the Church

The fact that the Church is missionary by nature and is sent to evangelize the whole world means that apostolic activity is not something individual or isolated, but is always carried out in communion with the local and universal Church.

This remark was made by Pope Paul VI concerning evangelizers,¹²³ but it also can be applied fully to catechists, whose role is eminently ecclesial.¹²⁴ They are sent by their pastors and act in virtue of a mandate given them by the Church. Their activity is part of the Church's activity and shares in its grace.

The following points should be stressed when training catechists in this area:

- **An attitude of apostolic obedience** to one's pastors, in a spirit of faith, just as Jesus "*emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death*" (Phil 2:7-8; cf. Heb 5:8; Rm 5:19). Obedience should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility, as catechists in their ministry are called upon to respond to the grace of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁵

In view of this, the **canonical mandate or mission** which is conferred in certain Churches is something to be encouraged, as it brings out the link between the catechist's mission and that of Christ and his Church. It should take place during a liturgical or liturgically inspired ceremony, at which the bishop or his delegate will confer the mandate, accompanied by some suitable sign, such as the presentation of a crucifix or a bible. There could be different grades of solemnity for full-time and part-time catechists.

- **An ability to work with others** at all levels is essential. Catechists should work in harmony with the local priests and religious, and especially with other members of the laity involved in the apostolate. They should fit into the overall pastoral plan and should meet from time to time with the others to discuss matters of common interest and review the work. The bishops should promote this type of work in common.

Catechists will be prepared to suffer for the Church, accepting the difficulties of work in common and the imperfections of others, and imitating Christ, who "*loved the Church and*

42 *Guide for Catechists*

gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25).¹²⁶

Training in this community spirit will be part of the catechists' training course from the beginning, with practical exercises carried out in groups.

27. Agents of formation

One of the problems of paramount importance in the field of formation of catechists is that of having suitable and sufficient formators. When we speak about the agents of formation, we should keep in mind all persons involved in formation.

The catechists should be convinced that: the most important formator is **Christ** himself, who forms them through the **Holy Spirit** (*Jn* 16:12-15). To hear God's voice requires a spirit of faith and an attitude of prayer and recollection. The education of apostles, in fact, is primarily a supernatural activity.

The **catechists** themselves can also be considered formators, in that they are responsible for their own interior growth through their response to God. They should be aware of this and should strive to listen always to the Divine Master so as to grow in wisdom and love.

Catechists work in communion with, at the service of and with the help of the **ecclesial community**. The community as a whole, therefore, is called to cooperate in the formation of its catechists, providing them with an atmosphere of acceptance and encouragement, welcoming them for what they are and offering them help. In the community, the **bishop and parish priests** hold a special place as formators. They will take an interest in the candidates, who in turn will be happy to learn from them.

Formators in the strict sense, i.e. those designated by the Church to train the catechists, have a most important role entrusted to them. They may be directors and staff of catechetical centers or may be charged with providing initial or ongoing formation outside of these centers. They should be chosen with care, and should be good Christians, loyal to the Church, with proper intellectual qualifications and personal experience in the catechetical field. It would be good if they

could work as a team, made up of priests, religious and lay men and women, chosen especially from among experienced catechists. Candidates should be able to trust their formators and respect them as guides offered by the Church to help them in their growth.

28. Initial formation

The initial or basic training period that precedes the beginning of a catechist's ministry is not the same in every Church, on account of the varying local conditions, but, whether the training is given in a catechetical center or in other ways, it should meet certain requirements. The following criteria should be born in mind:

- **Knowledge of the candidates:** they should be known personally and in their cultural milieu, not only so as to avoid making mistaken choices, but also for the formation to be personalized and adapted to the needs of each one.

- **Attention to the actual conditions** of the local Church and society. The training given should be not only theoretical but practical and rooted in the real life situations of the people.

- **A step-by-step approach.** The program should be methodical and gradual, respecting each candidate's progress and growth. One should not pretend to have a perfect catechist from the beginning, but should assist him to grow without interruption and incompleteness.

- **Orderly and complete method:** taking into consideration the situations of mission and of the pedagogy, the training should be **based on experience:** should aim at developing the **whole personality:** should promote a continuous **dialogue** between the candidate and God, the formators and the community: should be **liberating**, freeing the catechist from conscious or unconscious obstacles to God's action; and should promote unity and **harmony**

- The candidates should be helped to draw up a **life program**, with goals to be aimed at and means to achieve them, but in a realistic spirit. The goals should include identity and lifestyle, and also the qualities needed for the apostolate.

- There should be continual **personal dialogue** between

44 *Guide for Catechists*

the candidates and formators, who should be looked upon not merely as teachers but as friends and guides. As mentioned above, **spiritual direction** is very important, as it touches the depths of a person's soul and helps open it to God's grace.

- The **Christian community** in which the catechists live and work will also contribute to their formation, for no true apostolic education can take place outside of it. They will be constantly discovering how God's plan for salvation is being worked out in the community.

These guidelines should be taken into account where there are proper structures for initial formation, but even where these have not been established they can serve as a stimulus for both pastors and candidates. The training should not be improvised or left to the initiative of the candidates themselves.

29. Ongoing formation

The fact that persons should never stop growing interiorly, the dynamic nature of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the process of continual conversion and growth in apostolic love, changes in culture, the evolution of society and constant updating of teaching methods, all mean that catechists should keep themselves in a process of ongoing formation during the whole course of their service. It should include human, spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic formation, and they should be helped in this and not merely left to their own devices.¹²⁷

In the **early period** of their apostolate, ongoing formation will be largely the reinforcement of the basic training and its application in practice. **Later** it will entail updating on various points, so as to keep in touch with developments in theology and changing circumstances. In this endeavor one can ensure the quality of catechists, avoiding the risk of wearing down. In **certain cases** of special difficulty, such as discouragement or a change of work, it will entail a process of renewal and revitalization.

Ongoing formation is not the responsibility of the pastoral centers only, but should be attended to in each local community, especially as needs differ from person to person and place to place.¹²⁸

Besides, one should guarantee the use of the means of the ongoing formation. Obstacles to ongoing formation may come from lack of funds, of books and other teaching aids, of qualified personnel, of transport for distances that can often be considerable, etc. But, as with initial formation, every effort should be made to overcome such obstacles, as it is important that each catechist should be helped towards continual progress and growth. The catechetical centers are certainly the most suitable agencies for promoting ongoing formation. They should follow up their former students, especially soon after they graduate, through circulars and individual letters, teaching aids, visits from formators, refresher courses or meetings at the centers. etc

Where there are no centers, the diocesan authorities will try to ensure ongoing formation by means of short courses or renewal days directed by qualified personnel. Likewise individual parishes, or groups of parishes cooperating with each other, should organize such courses.¹²⁹

For proper ongoing formation, haphazard individual initiatives are not enough. There should be an organized program covering the various aspects of catechists' work, the development of their personalities and, above all, their spiritual growth.

In spite of going from time to time to catechetical centers or other meeting places, catechists will necessarily accomplish most of their ongoing formation in their local communities and will derive support from them. But wider horizons should also be opened, with opportunities for catechists to meet those of other local Churches.

Finally, ongoing formation will depend to a large extent on the catechists themselves. They should be aware of the need for constant renewal and updating, and should seek out the means for this in reading, prayer and contacts with others .

30. Means and structures of formation

Where possible, catechists should be trained in their own special centers or schools. Church documents from *Ad Gentes* to *Redemptoris Missio* stress the importance of making efforts "to establish and support schools for catechists, which are to be

46 *Guide for Catechists*

approved by the Episcopal Conferences and confer diplomas officially recognized by them."¹³⁰

The centers are very different entities: some of them being large residential centers with a team of formators and well organized training programs, while others are smaller centers for restricted groups or short courses. Most centers are diocesan or interdiocesan, some of them national or international.

There are **common elements** to these centers, such as a formative program, which makes the center a place of growth in faith, a possibility of residence, school teaching combined with pastoral experiences and, above all, the presence of the team of formators. There are also some **proper elements** which distinguish one center from the other: among them, for example, the minimum qualification and other conditions for entry, the length of the course, the methods employed, with a view to local conditions, and the categories of students: men or women or both; young people or adults: married or unmarried people or couples. Some centers will include training for the wife or husband of the candidate and issuing of diplomas.

It is important to promote contacts between catechetical centers, especially at a national level, under the guidance of the Episcopal Conference. Formators from the different centers should meet from time to time to exchange ideas and teaching methods and learn from the experiences of others.

Centers should aim not merely at training their students but at being places of research and reflection on themes connected with the apostolate, such as: catechesis itself, inculturation, interreligious dialogue, pastoral methods, etc.

Besides the centers or schools, there should also be **courses and encounters** of diverse duration and composition organized by the dioceses and parishes, particularly those in which the bishop and the parish priests participate. These are very significant means of training and, in certain zones and situations, they become the only way of formation. These courses do not counteract the programs of the centers, but help them keep on the impact or, as very often happens, compensate for deficiency.

Each diocese should make sure that it provides the books, audiovisual material and other teaching aids necessary for

catechetical training, and it would be good if there could be a pooling of ideas, information and teaching aids between centers, dioceses and neighboring countries.

The CEP insists on the fact that it is not sufficient to propose high objectives in formation, but one should identify and use efficacious means. Therefore, besides confirming the absolute priority of formators, who must be well prepared and sustained, the CEP asks that a strengthening of centers should be at work everywhere. Here too, a healthy realism is essential in order to avoid a theoretical discourse. The objective is to do things in such a way that all the dioceses have the possibility to train a certain number of their catechists, at least the *cadres*, in a center. Besides this, fostering the initiatives on the post, particularly the guided and programmed meetings, because they are indispensable for the first training of those [who] were not able to frequent a center, and for the permanent formation of all.

PART III

THE RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS CATECHISTS

VI. Remuneration for Catechists

31. The financial question in general

The question of proper remuneration for catechists is generally agreed to be one of the most difficult to solve. The problem, obviously, does not arise for religion teachers in schools where their salaries are paid by the State. But when catechists are paid by the Church, especially when they have a family to support, their salary must be adequate and must take full account of the cost of living. If the salary is not high enough, there will be several negative consequences: on the choice of candidates, because capable persons will prefer better paid jobs; on commitment, because it might be necessary to take on other work to make up the deficit; on formation, because some might not be able to attend the training courses; on perseverance and on relations with the pastors. Also, in many cultures a job is respected only if it is a well-paid one, so if catechists are not well paid they risk being looked down upon.

32. Practical solutions

Remuneration for catechists must be considered a matter of justice and not of benevolence. Both full-time and part-time catechists must be paid according to precise norms, drawn up at diocesan and parish levels, taking account of the local Church's financial situation, that of the catechist and his or her family, and the general economic conditions of the country. Special consideration has to be given to old, invalid and sick catechists.

The CEP, for its part, will continue, in so far as it can, to raise and distribute subsidies for catechists, but each diocese

should try to arrive at a more stable solution of the problem.

Dioceses and parishes, therefore, should set aside a reasonable proportion of their budgets for catechists, and in particular for their formation.¹³¹ The faithful too should contribute to their support, especially when it is a question of the village leader. The quality of persons, in particular those involved in direct apostolate, takes precedence over structures, and so funds earmarked for catechists should not be diverted to other purposes.

Money put into catechetical centers will be well spent, as these will certainly contribute to the "*active and effective catechesis*" of the community and therefore to its spiritual growth.¹³²

The good will of voluntary catechists, who have another job but are willing to devote part of their free time to catechetical work, is certainly to be encouraged, and indeed many such generous workers are to be found in the more developed Churches. The faithful should be taught, in fact, to look upon the vocation of a catechist as a mission rather than a job. Further it may be necessary to rethink the organization and distribution of catechists. The problem of remuneration, therefore, is one that has to be solved basically by the local Church. Subsidies from abroad can help, but it is up to the local Church to find a place in its budget for this important apostolic work and to educate the faithful to contribute to its support.

VII. Responsibility of the People of God

33. Responsibility of the community

The CEP would like to make a public declaration of gratitude to the bishops, priests and communities of faithful for the care and support they have given to catechists. Their attitude is a guarantee for the future of evangelization and the growth of the young Churches. For catechists are, indeed, front-line apostles without whom "*Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up.*"¹³³ They are essential to the Christian community and are rooted in it through their baptism,

50 *Guide for Catechists*

confirmation and special vocation. They should be given respect and responsibility in their work and should be able to achieve personal growth through it.

It is important to note that in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* Pope John Paul II, says: "*Among the laity who become evangelizers, catechists have a place of honor . . . Even with the extension of the services rendered by lay people both within and outside the Church, there is always need for the ministry of catechists, a ministry with its own characteristics.*"¹³⁴ And in his apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* the same Pontiff remarked that "*the term 'catechists' belongs above all to the catechists in mission lands.*"¹³⁵ Catechists are among those who have received Christ's command to "*go and teach all nations*" (Mt 28:19) and, according to Vatican II, they are "*legitimately active in the ministry of the word.*"¹³⁶

They should have a place of honor, therefore, in their communities and should be well represented in pastoral councils and other organizations of the parish and diocese. They are growing in number throughout the Church, and the future of Christian communities will depend on them to a considerable extent. In the secularized atmosphere of the modern world, as lay people they will have a particular role to play in bringing the light of the gospel to bear on various situations.¹³⁷ In any discussion on the theology of the laity, catechists will necessarily occupy a special place.

All these considerations converge on the urgency to strengthen the catechists with an adequate vocational promotion in number as well as, and above all, in quality, which calls for a careful and global formation program.

34. Responsibility of the bishops in particular

The bishops, as "*the ones primarily responsible for catechesis,*"¹³⁸ are also those primarily responsible for catechists. Recent documents of the Magisterium and the new Code of Canon Law stress this responsibility, based on the bishops' role as successors of the Apostles, both collegially and as pastors of local Churches.¹³⁹

The CEP urges individual bishops and the Episcopal

Conferences to continue and even increase their attention and care for catechists, making sure that there are definite criteria for selection, developing programs and structures for formation, seeing to questions of remuneration, etc. They should take an interest in their catechists and, as far as possible, have a personal relationship with each of them. Where this is not possible, an episcopal vicar should be named for them.

From its own experience, the CEP suggests the following points for special attention:

- Making the faithful, and especially priests, **aware of the importance** and role of catechists.

- Drawing up or renewing **catechetical directories** on a national or diocesan level, so as to apply and adapt to local conditions the guidelines of the *General Catechetical Directory*. the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* and the present *Guide for Catechists*.

- Guaranteeing a minimum of **teaching aids and equipment** for the formation of catechists, so that they will be properly trained for their task; also, if possible, founding or improving catechetical centers. ^{"140}

- Encouraging the preparation and selection of *cadres* i.e. catechists who have been well trained in a center and who have had a certain amount of experience, to work closely with the bishop and priests, to help in the training and guidance of volunteer catechists, and to take leading roles in the application of the catechetical program.

- Providing, with the help of the community, a **budget** for the training, activities and maintenance of catechists

Above all, bishops will express their responsibility for catechists through paternal love, attention to their needs and personal acquaintance with them.

35. Responsibility of the priests

Priests, and parish priests in particular, as teachers of the faith and immediate collaborators of the bishop, have a special responsibility for catechists. As pastors, who should recognize, promote and coordinate the various charisms in the community, they should have a particular interest in that of catechists, who

52 *Guide for Catechists*

share with them the task of instructing people in the faith. They should look on them as cooperators, responsible for the ministry entrusted to them, and not as subordinates carrying out instructions. They should encourage them to be creative and show initiative. They should also educate the community to respect their catechists, help them in their work and contribute to their support, especially if they have a family.

Future priests should be taught in the seminary to value and respect catechists as apostles and fellow-workers in the Lord's vineyard.

36. Responsibility of the formators

The training of catechists is usually entrusted to qualified persons, either in special centers or in the parishes. These formators have an important role and make a valuable contribution to the Church. They should be aware, therefore, of the responsibility that is theirs.

When a person accepts the mandate to train the catechists, he should consider the concrete expression of the care of pastors and should seriously follow their directives. In the same way, he should live the ecclesial dimension of this mandate, realizing it in a communitarian spirit and following the programs therein.

As was mentioned above, formators should be chosen for their spiritual, moral and pedagogical qualities. They should be exemplary Christians, able to educate others by the witness of their own lives. They should be close to their students and should communicate their own fervor and enthusiasm to them.

Every diocese will do its best to have a team of formators, made up possibly of priests, brothers, sisters and lay people, who could be sent to parishes to help in the selection and training of catechists.

CONCLUSION

37. A hope for the mission of the third millennium

The directives contained in this *Guide* are proposed as a general model, to serve as an ideal and be adapted where necessary.

The catechists are held in great esteem for their participation in missionary activities and for their characteristics which are rarely found in the ecclesial communities outside the mission.

Their number continues to grow and in recent years has been between 250,000 and 350,000. For many missionaries they have been absolutely indispensable, serving as their close assistants and at times interpreters. They have often been able to keep the faith of a community alive during trying periods, and their families have given priestly and religious vocations.

We cannot but have the greatest respect for these "*fraternal animators of young communities*,"¹⁴¹ and feel that we should place the highest ideals before them, while recognizing that, because of objective difficulties or personal limitations, ideals are not always attained.

By way of conclusion, we may quote the words of Pope John Paul II to the catechists of Angola during his visit to that country: "*So many times it has fallen to you to strengthen and build up the young Christian communities, and even to found new ones through the first proclamation of the gospel. If missionaries could not be there for this first proclamation or had to leave before it could be followed up, it was you, the catechists, who instructed the catechumens, prepared people for the sacraments, taught the faith and were leaders of the Christian community (. . .) Give thanks to the Lord for the gift of your vocation, through which Christ has called you from among other men and women to be instruments of his salvation. Respond with generosity to your vocation and your names will be written in heaven (cf Lk 10:20).*"¹⁴²

54 *Guide for Catechists*

The CEP hopes that, with God's help and that of the Virgin Mary, this *Guide* will give new impulse to the promotion of catechists, so that their generous contribution will continue to bear fruit for the Church's mission in the third millennium.

The supreme Pontiff John Paul II, during the course of the Audience granted to the undersigned cardinal Prefect on June 16th, 1992, approved the present Guide for Catechists and gave consent to its publication.

Rome, from the Office of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, December 3rd, 1993, Feast of Saint Francis Xavier.

Jozef Card. Tomko, *Prefect*

Giuseppe Uhac, Arch. tit. of Tharros, *Secretary*

NOTES

¹ Cf Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, April 14-16, 1970, and its final report: *Bibliografia Missionaria* 34 (1970), 197-212, and *S.C. de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*. 111/2 (1976), 821-831 .

² Cf. VATICAN ECUM. COUNCIL II. Decree on the *Church's Missionary Activity Ad Gentes*, 17.

³ POPE John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly of the CEP*. April 30, 1992, or May 1, 1992, 4; cf. also the addresses to the catechists of Guinea at Conakry, Feb. 25, 1992, and to those of Angola in the Benguela cathedral, June 9, 1992: or June 11, 1992, 6.

⁴ Cf John Paul II Encyc. Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, Dec. 7, 1990. 73: AAS 83 (1991) 320.

⁵ VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 17; 8.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*. Vatican City. 1992.

⁷ John Paul II, Apos. Exhort. *Fidei Depositum*, Oct. 11, 1992, 4.

⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Apost. Exhort. *Christifideles Laici*, Dec. 30,

- 1988, 56: AAS 81 (1989) 504-506.
- ⁹ Cf. Plenary Assembly cit., I.2.
- ¹⁰ Cfr. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 15.
- ¹¹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 58, *l.c.* 507-509.
- ¹² Cf. CIC CC. 773-780 AND c. 785.
- ¹³ Cf. CCC 6.
- ¹⁴ John Paul II. Apos. Exhort. *Catechesi Tradendae*, Oct. 16, 1979, 66: AAS 71 (1979) 1331.
- ¹⁵ No. 73, *l.c.* 321.
- ¹⁶ CIC c. 785, 1.
- ¹⁷ Plenary Assembly cit., 1.
- ¹⁸ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 23: *l.c.* 429-433; CIC c. 230, 2.
- ¹⁹ Plenary Assembly cit. I. 4.
- ²⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 74: *l.c.* 322; CCC 4-5; 7-8; 1697-1698.
- ²¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly cit.*, 2; CCC 6.
- ²² Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 65: *l.c.* 1330.
- ²³ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 73: *l.c.* 321.
- ²⁴ John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly cit.*, 3; Cf. S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, April 11, 1971, 108: AAS 64 (1972) 161.
- ²⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 31 ff.: *l.c.* 276 ff.
- ²⁶ John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly cit.*, 4.
- ²⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 74: *l.c.* 322; *Angelus* Oct. 18, 1987: or Oct. 29-20, 1987, 5.
- ²⁸ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 90; *l.c.* 337.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ Paul VI, Apost. Exhort. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Dec. 8, 1975, 80: AAS 68 (1976) 72-75.
- ³¹ CIC c. 225, 2.
- ³² John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly cit.*, 2.
- ³³ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 26-27; *l.c.* 1298-1299.
- ³⁴ CIC 225, 2; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 87: *l.c.* 334; CCC 2653-2654.
- ³⁵ Cf. CIC c. 747, 1.
- ³⁶ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 2; 6; 9.

56 Guide for Catechists

- ³⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 89: l.c. 335-336.
- ³⁸ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 2.
- ³⁹ Cf. VAT. II, Dogm. Const. on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 4; *Ad Gentes*, 4.
- ⁴⁰ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 76; l.c. 68; cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 57: l.c. 1323-1324.
- ⁴¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 27: l.c. 1298-1299.
- ⁴² Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75: l.c. 68; cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 57: l.c. 1323-1324.
- ⁴³ Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 10, 1-3; PG 550-554; John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 60-61: l.c. 1325-1328; *Redemptoris Missio*, 11: l.c. 259-260.
- ⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 61, l.c. 1328.
- ⁴⁵ CCC 429.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 89: l.c. 335-336; CCC 849-851.
- ⁴⁷ Cf. CCC 853.
- ⁴⁸ John Paul, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 73: l.c. 1340.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Cf. *Sermo* 25, 7: PL 46, 937-938.
- ⁵¹ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 73: l.c. 1340; *Redemptoris Missio* 92: l.c. 339; cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 82: l.c. 76.
- ⁵² Cf. CCC 487-507; 963-972.
- ⁵³ Cf. CCC 2673-2679.
- ⁵⁴ VAT. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 65.
- ⁵⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the third International Conference on Longevity and Quality of Life: Dolentium Hominum: Church and Health in the World*, 10 (1989) 6-8.
- ⁵⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Apost. Exhort. Salvifici Doloris*, Feb. 11, 1984, 19: AAS 19 (1984) 225-226.
- ⁵⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 48: l.c. 485-486.
- ⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Apost. Exhort., Familiaris Consortio*, Nov. 22, 1981, 27: AAS 73 (1981) 113.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 95: l.c. 154-155.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 53: l.c. 1319-1321.
- ⁶¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 52: l.c. 300.

⁶² Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 9, 16, 22; *Gaudium et Spes*, 44, 57 ff; Paul VI, Apost. Lett. *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, III, 18, 2; ID., Address at Kampala August 2, 1969; AAS 61 (1969) 587-490; ID., *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 62 ff.: l.c. 52 ff; John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 10: l.c. 90-91; ID., *Christifideles Laici*, 44: l.c. 478-481; ID., *Redemptoris Missio*, 52-54: l.c. 299-300; CCC 854, 1204-1206; 1232.

⁶³ Cf. CCC 2628.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 59: l.c. 307; cf.

Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31: l.c. 26-27.

⁶⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 59: l.c. 307; cf. ID., Encyc. Letter *Centesimus Annus*, May 1, 1991; 53 ff: AAS 83 (1991) 859 ff.; CCC 1939-1942.

⁶⁶ Cf. VAT. II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 42; Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 25-28; 32-34; l.c. 23-25; 27-28; CCC 2443-2449.

⁶⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 41-43: l.c. 470-478; CCC 1908; 2442.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 60: l.c. 309; cf. CCC 2443-2449.

⁶⁹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 59; l.c. 308.

⁷⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyc. Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Dec. 30, 1987, 42: AAS 80 (1988) 572-574; ID., *Catechesi Tradendae*, 41; 45: l.c. 1311; 1314; *Redemptoris Missio*, 60: l.c. 308-309; *Centesimus Annus*, 57: l.c. 862-863.

⁷¹ VAT. II, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1; cf. *Ad Gentes*, 6; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 36; 50: l.c. 281; 297-298; CCC 817; 885.

⁷² Cf. VAT. II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, cf. S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 27: l.c. 115.

⁷³ Cf. CCC 820-822.

⁷⁴ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 15.

⁷⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 50: l.c. 297-298.

⁷⁶ Cf. CIC c. 755.

⁷⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 33: l.c. 1305-1306.

⁷⁸ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 32: l.c. 1304; cf. VAT. II, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3-4, 11; S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 27: l.c. 115.

⁷⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 32: l.c. 1304; cf. S.C.

58 *Guide for Catechists*

for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 27: *l.c.* 115.

⁸⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 32: *l.c.* 1304-1305; ID., *Redemptoris Missio*, 50: *l.c.* 297-298.

⁸¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55-56: *l.c.* 302-305; Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue—Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, May 19, 1991; cf. Secretariat for Non-Christians, *The Church's attitude to followers of other religions*, Sept. 4, 1984; AAS 76 (1984) 816-828; CCC 839-845; 856; 1964.

⁸² Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 56; *l.c.* 305-306; Pont. Council for Inter-religious Dialogue—Cong. for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 40-41.

⁸³ Cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 1, 1: PG 21, 28 AB; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III, 18, 1: PG 7, 932; ID., III, 20, 2; *Ibid.* 943; St. Justinus, *1 Apol.* 46; PG 6, 395; VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 3; 11.

⁸⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 55; *l.c.* 302-304.

⁸⁵ Cf. VAT. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 14; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3; *Ad Gentes*, 7.

⁸⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Urban University*, April 11, 1991: *or*, April 13, 1991, 5; cf. CCC, 846-848.

⁸⁷ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 12; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 60: *l.c.* 865-866.

⁸⁸ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 57: *l.c.* 305.

⁸⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 50: *l.c.* 297-298.

⁹⁰ Cf. Secretariat for Christian Unity—Secr. for Non-Christians—Pont. Council for Culture, *The phenomenon of sects and new religious movements*, May 7, 1986: *or*, May 7, 1986, tabloid supplement.

⁹¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of Zaire: or*, April 24, 1988, 4.

⁹² Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 50: *l.c.* 297-298.

⁹³ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 50: *l.c.* 297-298.

⁹⁴ Cong. for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Pastoral Guide for Diocesan Priests*, Oct. 1, 1989, 17: EV 2579-2681.

⁹⁵ Cf. St. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, PL 40, 310-347.

⁹⁶ S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 108: *l.c.* 161.

⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly cit.*, 3; also VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 17; *Christus Dominus*, 14; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 73: *l.c.* 320-321; *Christifideles Laici*, 60: *l.c.* 510-512; CIC, c. 785.

⁹⁸ Cf. VAT. II, Decree on Bishops *Christus Dominus*, 40; S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 108; 115: *l.c.* 161; 164-165.

⁹⁹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 59: *l.c.* 509.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 5-6; 9: *l.c.* 1280-1281; 1284.

¹⁰² Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 90: *l.c.* 337.

¹⁰³ Cf. CCC 428.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistula ad Magnesios*, IX, 1: Funk 1, 329.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. VAT. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 72: *l.c.* 1338; cf. St. Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 97, 1: PL 35, 1887.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 114: *l.c.* 164; CCC 2742-2745.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. VAT. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 34; CCC 1324-1327; 1343; 1369; 1382 ff.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. CCC 1071-1075; 1136 ff.; 2655.

¹¹⁰ Cf. CCC 1174-1178.

¹¹¹ Cf. CCC 2653-2654; 2705-2708.

¹¹² Cf. CCC 1446-1456.

¹¹³ Cf. S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 71: *l.c.* 142.

¹¹⁴ Cf. *General Catechetical Directory*, 112-113: *l.c.* 163-164.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Plenary Assembly cit., II, 1-2.

¹¹⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 78: *l.c.*; John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 61: *l.c.* 1327-1328.

¹¹⁷ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 6: *l.c.* 1281.

¹¹⁸ S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 70 ff.; *l.c.* 141 ff.

¹¹⁹ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 12; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 44-45: *l.c.* 290-292; CCC 854.

60 Guide for Catechists

- ¹²⁰ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 13; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 44-45: *l.c.* 292-295; CCC 854.
- ¹²¹ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 14; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 46-47: *l.c.* 292-295; *Ordo Initiationis Christianae*; CCC 854.
- ¹²² Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 15; John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 48: *l.c.* 295; CCC 854.
- ¹²³ Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 60: *l.c.* 50-51.
- ¹²⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 24: *l.c.* 1297.
- ¹²⁵ Cf. VAT. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 12.
- ¹²⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 89: *l.c.* 335-336.
- ¹²⁷ Cf. S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 110: *l.c.* 162.
- ¹²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁹ Cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 17.
- ¹³⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 73: *l.c.* 321; cf. VAT. II, *Ad Gentes*, 17; S.C. for the Clergy, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 71: *l.c.* 1337; *CIC c.* 785, 2.
- ¹³¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 63: *l.c.* 1329.
- ¹³² Cf. *Ibid.*
- ¹³³ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 66: *l.c.* 1331.
- ¹³⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 73 *l.c.* 320-321.
- ¹³⁵ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 66: *l.c.* 1331; cf. *Angelus*, Oct. 18, 1987: *or.*, Oct. 19-20, 1987, 5.
- ¹³⁶ VAT. II, *Dei Verbum*, 25.
- ¹³⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Plenary Assembly cit.* 2.
- ¹³⁸ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 63: *l.c.* 1329.
- ¹³⁹ Cf. VAT. II, *Christus Dominus*, 14; John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 63: *l.c.* 1328-1329; S.C. for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, 108: *l.c.* 161; *CIC cc.* 773, 780.
- ¹⁴⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 71: *l.c.* 318-319.
- ¹⁴¹ John Paul II, *Address to the catechists of Guinea*, *cit.*
- ¹⁴² John Paul II, *Address to the catechists of Angola*, *cit.*

449782

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
CLAREMONT, CALIF.